



## NORTHCENTRAL UNIVERSITY ASSIGNMENT COVER SHEET

Student: **Michael Higley-Vance**

### THIS FORM MUST BE COMPLETELY FILLED IN

**Follow these procedures:** If requested by your instructor, please include an assignment cover sheet. This will become the first page of your assignment. In addition, your assignment header should include your last name, first initial, course code, dash, and assignment number. This should be left justified, with the page number right justified. For example:

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**Save a copy of your assignments:** You may need to re-submit an assignment at your instructor's request. Make sure you save your files in accessible location.

**Academic integrity:** All work submitted in each course must be your own original work. This includes all assignments, exams, term papers, and other projects required by your instructor. Knowingly submitting another person's work as your own, without properly citing the source of the work, is considered plagiarism. This will result in an unsatisfactory grade for the work submitted or for the entire course. It may also result in academic dismissal from the University.

**EL7003-8**

**Dr. Linda Collins**

**Instructional Design and Engaging E-Learning Activities**

**Activity # 5: Introductory Icebreaker Activities**

**Comments:** I created a *Blackboard* account for instructor and learner. In order for me to create, reflect, and write about the online course activities I had to create them in rough draft form. I am including the student user name a password I created. Please feel free to use the user name and password to take a look at my efforts to see how it all words, outside of theory.

**Username:** [m20tiggstudent](#) **Password:** [Student](#)

#### Faculty Use Only

Hi, Michael, great icebreakers and so original to use an acrostic for this type of an activity. I also enjoyed the Disney character survey – I coordinate the Disney Internship program at the community college I teach at and this is a fun activity I would like to use. These types of engaging icebreakers provide more complexity – in a good way – to get students to engage and interact. These are also activities students will

remember and also help in building the online learning community for the classes. Your facilitator notes are important and provide encouragement to the students and your video is very welcoming and informative. You have addressed all the criteria for this activity and provided some fun teaching and learning moments for students. Dr. Collins

Dr. Linda D. Collins      7      2.9      January 13, 2014

### Introductory Icebreaker Activities

Michael Higley-Vance

Northcentral University

### Introductory Icebreaker Activities

Appropriately framing a course or lesson task with an icebreaker activity is a useful technique in establishing context in which a task will take place (Collard, nd). The purpose of this paper is to plan and outline two thoroughly thought out online icebreaker activities, reflecting on the criteria used in designing the preceding icebreakers, while also providing a rationale for the activity tasks effectiveness.

#### **Icebreaker Activity #1**

**Task:** Acrostic Poem – 1<sup>st</sup> introductory task for the beginning of the online Literacy course.

**Objectives:** The learners will write an acrostic poem using the letters of the learner's first name. The learner will reflect on the acrostic poem of one other learner, and provide one comment and ask one question of that learner. Learners will then be required to interact with their partner by reflecting on the comment and question posed to them about their poem.

**Method:** Asynchronous/Synchronous

**Time required:** two days

**Materials:**

- Blackboard learning management system (LMS) discussion feature board
- YouTube video presentation
- Google spreadsheet

**Preparation:** Prior to the start of the literacy course an activity page, within Blackboard, will be created entitled "Acrostic Poem Icebreaker". A Google spreadsheet will be created and linked within the blackboard course for learners to place their names and find partners interested in

completing the task. A discussion thread will be created within the LMS course entitled “ACROSTIC Poems”.

**Process:** Learners will enter Blackboard and select the activity entitled “Acrostic Poem Icebreaker” located on the left side pane of the online course window. Once on the activity page learners will find written instructions and a video presentation describing the icebreaker activity, the objectives, and the expected learner performance outcomes. The video presentation and written instructions will provide learners with instructions on how to participate and locate their activity partners using a Google spreadsheet link. Learners will submit their poems using the discussion board forum within the first day. On the second day, learners will use the discussion board to submit their reflective comment and question about their partner’s poem. Finally learners will reply to the question and comment posed to their poems.

**Anticipated Activity Steps:**

1. Enter the Blackboard learning system.
2. Select the “Acrostic Poem Icebreaker” activity.
3. View the video presentation.
4. Read the written instructions.
5. Select the Google spreadsheet link and sign up to participate next to a partner who needs a partner.
6. Enter the discussion thread and add your Acrostic poem.
7. Locate your partner’s completed Acrostic poem and reply to it with a comment and question. (If you are choosing to participate but do not have a partner please post your poem and then comment and question the poem of your instructor.)
8. Finally learners will reply to the question and comment posted to their poem (with at least 100-150 words).

**Facilitator’s Notes:** This activity is designed to take two days and as long as learners participate learners will be successful. It will work with virtual classes of any size and any odd student will be paired with the instructor. This activity is worth 5 bonus points towards the final assignment and learners who choose not to participate will receive an email from the instructor offering guidance and support along with information about why icebreaker activities are so important.

**Task #1 Reflection**

The first activity appropriate for the first few days of an online course in literacy would be a common “about me” task. This is a very easy introductory activity task, which requires little preparation and enables learners to contribute to the course, share, and feel engaged immediately beginning the course. Learners are expected to sign into Blackboard daily, and encouraged to participate. Because this activity task requires little preparation from the instructor and since learners are given an opportunity to be creative, learners should feel

successful within the first two days of participating in the course. Learners should login to the course discussion board and ask questions of each other, posting comments, completing tasks, or emailing. One advantage to this task is the ongoing discourse, which may develop, from the discussion board posts and task expectations. Another benefit of this task is that it requires learners to pay special attention to the poems of others, their comments, and questions posed to them in order to provide a clear and concise reply according to the provided rubric. This is an important skill to practice and the one we begin with in this online literacy course.

## **Icebreaker Activity #2**

**Task:** What Disney Character Are You – 2<sup>nd</sup> introductory task for the beginning of the online Literacy course.

**Objectives:** Learners will complete a personality survey to determine which Disney character they are most like. Learners will write a short reflective essay summarizing the results of the personality survey. Learners will reply to another learner's reflective essay and demonstrate appropriate interactivity within this task.

**Method:** Asynchronous/Synchronous

**Time required:** three days

### **Materials:**

- Blackboard learning management system (LMS) discussion feature board
- YouTube video presentation
- External personality survey links

**Preparation:** Prior to the start of the literacy course an activity page will be created entitled "What Disney Character Are You". A discussion thread will be created within the LMS course entitled "What Disney Character Are You".

**Process:** Learners will enter Blackboard and select the activity entitled "What Disney Character Are You" located on the left pane of the online course window. On this activity page learners will find written instructions and a video presentation describing the icebreaker activity, the objectives, and the expected learner performance outcomes. The video presentation and written instructions will provide learners with instructions on how to complete the Disney survey and essay. Learners will be instructed to submit their reflective character essays using the discussion

board forum. Finally, learners will use the discussion board to reply to another learner's character reflection essay.

**Anticipated Activity Steps:**

1. Enter the Blackboard learning system.
2. Select the "What Disney Character Are You" activity.
3. View the video presentation.
4. Read the written instructions.
5. Select and complete one of the survey links provided.
6. Once you have identified the Disney Character you are most like, enter the discussion board and add your character reflection essay following the provided rubric, (with at least 200-300 words).
7. Finally, reply to another learner's character reflection essay (using at least 100-200 words).

**Facilitator's Notes:** This activity will work with virtual classes of any size and is scheduled to last no more than 3 days. This activity is worth 5 bonus points towards the final assignment and learners who choose not to participate will receive an email from the instructor offering guidance and support along with information about why icebreaker activities are so important.

**Task #2 Reflection**

The second activity task seems appropriate for the last few days of the first week. Again, this is a very easy introductory activity, which requires little preparation by the instructor. It is meant to be a fun task and enables learners to share and reflect on the Disney character they are most like. Just like with the first activity task, learners are expected to sign into Blackboard daily and in this task are expected to complete one of the Disney surveys, login to the course discussion board, and write a reflection essay. One advantage that continues to be a possibility is the ongoing discourse, which may develop. This task, like the first, requires learners to pay close attention to written forms of communication and be able to reflect clearly, in writing, what they have read and comprehend.

**Rationale of Effectiveness**

Beginning an online course with an icebreaker activity has a number of benefits such as reducing learner anxiety, fostering creativity, and enhancing an effective learning environment

(DeSilets & Dickerson, 2008; Zigmond, 2008). The initial experiences student have with any course establishes the tone for future tasks within a given course. Beginning course activities should encourage interactions and allow learners to communicate freely (DeSilets & Dickerson, 2008; Zigmond, 2008). Learner reactions to these icebreaker activity tasks can often indicate quickly those who will be successful and those who may struggle (DeSilets & Dickerson, 2008).

### **Conclusion**

The goals of the two introductory icebreaker tasks were to build rapport between the course participants and create a connection between the overall course literacy objectives. Both of the activities presented in this paper were designed to connect learners to literacy skills and practice. The activities were similar because they are both conducted in synchronous and asynchronous ways depending on the learners. Each has a distinctive approach to encouraging interactivity between learners despite being similar to one another. The means for completing these tasks are through the course discussion boards however, the instructions were provided in visual and written form. This addresses both the visual and auditory learners as well as the logical and solitary preferred learning styles. All introductory tasks were created to meet a variety of learning styles to include social learning, although many of the tasks could be completed virtually intrapersonally even though they were created with social characteristics. Each icebreaker task encourages learners to communicate within the course, and fosters the anticipated results expected from introductory activities such as these.

## References

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